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WHY DO YOU SWEAR?

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FRIEND, permit me to ask you in kindness, if you have well considered the words which I just now heard you utter? As a thoughtful man, you must admit that there should be *good reasons* for all the acts of life. In all your business transactions, or pleasure-seeking pursuits, do you not consider before hand what will be the probable result? And if you have reason to believe there is a prospect of advantage to you, you go forward; otherwise, you do not. Why do you invest your money? Why do you pursue a profession? Why do you labor with your hands? Why are you a soldier? For all these you have doubtless good and sufficient reasons. My friend, why do you swear? If you have reasons sufficient

to justify you in the practice, certainly you can have no objection to telling me what they are. Come, sit down a while, and "let us reason together." If you can convince me that it is *proper* and *profitable*, as a reasonable man, I must withdraw my opposition to it. But if, on the other hand, I shall be able to show that it is highly injurious, and extremely dangerous, will you not cease it forever? We generally speak of men as being possessed of a three-fold nature—the physical, intellectual and moral man. Such a man are you! Now I can understand how certain pursuits can be profitable to your physical man—labor or money-making, for instance. I can see how other pursuits can benefit the intellectual—such as study, reading, conversation, &c. I am convinced that yet other practices can be of advantage to the moral nature—these are the reading of God's word, prayer to Him, and faith in His Son Jesus. But tell me, does *swearing* come under any of these heads?

1. As a mere physical creature, how much are you profited by being a profane

man? Have you made more money by being a swearer than you otherwise would have done? Has your labor been easier? Can you march longer, and endure more fatigue and greater hardships because you are a swearer? Have you a better appetite—is your bread sweeter because you swear? Do you rest more quietly, and is your sleep more refreshing because you profane God's holy name? Are you more exempt from bodily suffering and diseases, and will you live longer because you swear?

Are you a braver man, a better soldier, and more ready to die for your country?—To all these questions you answer like an honest man, NO! Then why do you swear, when, by your own admission there is no bodily profit?

2. But you have a mind, an intellect. Does swearing improve that mind? Are you a wiser man for every oath which you utter? Do you reason more clearly, is your intellect more elevated by reason of profanity? As a rational being you *ought* to have exalted ideas of the character of God, does swearing produce them, or

otherwise? You *ought* to revere and honor his laws. Does the swearer do so?—Then why do you swear?

3. But further. You have a *moral nature.* What say you to the effect of profanity upon it? You are are a better or worse man because of it. There is no neutrality. Dare you say that you are a more pious man because you swear? Do you *love* God more—do you love your fellow-man whom you *curse?* Do you love the Bible which condemns the swearer? Do you, can you pray for yourself and others while your mouth is foul with curses? Stop, friend, do not leave so abruptly. 'Tis because I love you that I speak thus to you. Analyze, for just one minute, your feelings while under the power of this demon of profanity:

First. With reference to your Heavenly Father—honestly answer me. Do you not feel a loss of respect and reverence for His holy name whom you revile? Is not your heart colder and more rebellious toward him? Are you not less inclined to pray to Him? Would you not prefer that His eye should not see, His

ear hear you? Are you not less willing to meet Him at the judgment? Yes!

Secondly. In reference to your fellow-mortal. Do you not love him less or hate him more? After your imprecations, are you not more ready to do him an injury? Yes!

Thirdly, as to yourself. Is not your heart harder because of profanity? Is it not less susceptible of divine impressions? Is it not more gross, beastly, earthly, sensual, devilish? Yes! Have you listened to the voice of conscience in this matter? No! But you have a character—every man has! Has not your character suffered in the eyes of all good and rational men? Yes. Do you respect *yourself* as you would have done, had you never been a swearer? No.

Can you look into the eyes of that pure woman whom you call mother, wife or sister, and feel that she loves you more because you are a swearer? Would you love her more, were she as profane as you? Look at that innocent child; is it a pleasant thought that he shall become as *foul-mouthed* as you? No! No!! But

see how he listens, he is now taking his first lesson in profanity from *you*. Your conscience does not approve it in yourself; you would not recommend it to mother, wife, sister or child. Then why do you swear? Now, if I can convince you that it is *highly injurious* and *extremely* dangerous, will you not cease forever to be a swearer?

My argument is simple. What ever fails to benefit the physical intellectual or moral nature must in the end have an opposite effect—that is become injurious. There are few if any points of absolute neutrality in the moral universe and certainly this is not one of them, and you this moment are convinced that it is injurious, and highly so because it carries with it a spirit of rebellion against conscience, society and God which ramifies all your nature. Again. All open and voluntary transgressions of God's holy law are *extremely dangerous*, because it puts the creature in direct opposition to the most powerful, wise, holy, and just being in all the universe, who says "I am a jealous God and will not give my glory

to another." Will He then allow you to *detract* from His glory with impunity? The most open, daring, and voluntary sin which men commit is swearing. There is no apology for it—no attempt at concealing it—no lust or appetite which calls for it. The murderer commits the deed in the dark. The adulterer in secret.—The extortioner under false pretences. The one for revenge, the other for lust, the third for gain—but *you* swear publicly and loudly and for——nothing. And now listen to what God says, and may His Holy Spirit impress the solemn words of warning upon your heart. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." Ex. xx: 7. "For thus said He unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side, according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it." Zech. v: 3.

"For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourneth:

the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force is not right." Jer. xxiii: 10.

"By swearing and lying and killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood. Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish." Hos. iv: 2—3.

See what a dark catalogue of crimes and you by your profanity have placed yourself in it, made yourself a companion according to Gods word with *liars*, *murderers*, *thieves*, and adulterers. According to the law of Moses a man was executed for cursing the name of God.—And had declared that "whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin." How terrible the responsibility—*dare you meet it?* And now farewell; perhaps until the judgment, and may God in mercy help you to cease to swear and learn to pray. Amen.

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